

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 199920 TOSEC 090067
ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY EUR/NE:DJDONCHI:NLS

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 199920 TOSEC 090067

EXDIS - FOR SECRETARY FROM EUR ACTING ASST. SEC. VINE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, IC

SUBJECT: VISIT OF ICELANDIC FOREIGN MINISTER AGUSTSSON

1. I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU PREFER TO SEE ICELANDIC FOREIGN MINISTER AGUSTSSON IN NEW YORK DURING THE UNGA SESSION RATHER THAN SEPARATELY IN WASHINGTON AS PROPOSED IN OUR AUGUST 12TH MEMORANDUM. AGUSTSSON HAS RECENTLY RECOVERED FROM A SERIOUS ILLNESS THAT FORCED HIM TO CANCEL A PLANNED VISIT TO WASHINGTON LAST JUNE. YOU HAD AGREED TO RECEIVE HIM DURING THAT VISIT. I BELIEVE THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD BE MOST DISAPPOINTED IF HE WERE UNABLE TO RESCHEDULE A CALL ON YOU IN WASHINGTON WHICH WOULD BE THE HIGHPOINT OF HIS TRIP.

2. UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, ICELAND GENERALLY WOULD HAVE LITTLE CLAIM ON YOUR TIME. IN JANUARY, HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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PRIME MINISTER HALLGRIMSSON MADE A DIRECT APPEAL TO VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE WHEN THEY MET IN ICELAND FOR A MAJOR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARD CONSTRUCTION OF A CIVILIAN AIR TERMINAL AT OUR KEFLAVIK MILITARY BASE. THE PRESIDENT, AFTER CAREFUL STUDY, TURNED DOWN THAT REQUEST. OUR RELATIONS WITH ICELAND ARE THUS CURRENTLY DICEY AND WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE KEFLAVIK BASE.

3. MOREOVER, THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND INDEED MOST ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO MATTERS OF PROTOCOL AND DIPLOMATIC APPEARANCES. THIS ENVIRONMENT, WHEN COUPLED WITH OUR REJECTION OF PRIME MINISTER HALLGRIMSSON'S REQUEST FOR A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARD THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW AIR TERMINAL BUILDING AND A REFUSAL BY YOU TO RECEIVE THE MINISTER IN WASHINGTON, WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY GIVE THE ICELANDERS THE WRONG SIGNAL AND COULD PRECIPITATE A MORE SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN BILATERAL RELATIONS.

4. THE MINISTER INTENDS TO COME TO WASHINGTON IN ANY CASE FOR APPOINTMENTS REQUESTED WITH THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXIM BANK.

5. FOR THESE REASONS, I WOULD HOPE THAT YOU CAN RECONSIDER YOUR DECISION AND AGREE TO RECEIVE THE FOREIGN MINISTER FOR A BRIEF OFFICE CALL ON SEPTEMBER 19 OR 20. I WOULD THEN PROPOSE THAT A SMALL LUNCHEON BE HOSTED BY ANOTHER PRINCIPAL OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT. CHRISTOPHER

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